

# The Individual and the State

[A Study in Political Theory]

BY

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KITAB-MAHAL  
ALLAHABAD

1944

FIRST EDITION, 1944

PRINTED BY M. MAQBUL AHMAD AT THE  
CLEAR-TYPE PRESS, ALLAHABAD AND  
PUBLISHED BY KITAB-MAHAL,  
ALLAHABAD.

## Preface

Some three years ago, I wrote a book in Hindi\* dealing with the principles that should guide the relations of the Individual with the State. Some friends who seemed to like my treatment of the subject suggested that I might write a similar book in English. This is the genesis of the present attempt.

That the subject is of great importance goes without saying. It has, in fact, acquired a greater importance than before, in the peculiar circumstances prevailing today. We seem to be witnessing the end of a chapter in human civilization. Liberty, democracy, and all the other slogans of the past seem to have lost their appeal. A new type of State-organization has reared up its head and the whole scheme of spiritual values on which our culture was built

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\* *Vyakti aur Raj* (व्यक्ति और राज)

up is in the melting point. It is necessary, therefore, to consider the essentials of the problem, so that the new edifice that we build up may not, for lack of sound foundations, come tumbling down even before it is complete. The Individual will exist, in future, as he has in the past ; so will the State. It is, therefore, desirable to investigate the basic principles of the ties that bind them to each other. This involves a study of political philosophy which is nothing but the application of the general principles of philosophy to the domain of politics. Life is one whole and so is Truth. Our conception of the nature of Reality and of the human self will determine our attitude towards life and the institutions which man has built up in the long course of his history. The State is one of these institutions and, as such, it must find a place in our general philosophical scheme.

This brings me to my treatment of the subject-matter. I have given a brief but,



I hope, fair account of the important theories that hold the field and have, then, gone on to build up my own thesis. This is, frankly, based on the conception of Reality which is popularly known as the *advaita* system of *vedanta* and associated with the name of Sri Shankaracharya. Starting from this position which leads to the conclusion that freedom and bliss are the very essence of the self, and the State, like every other institution, has the right to exist only in so far as it serves to help the self to express and realize itself. I discuss the conditions under which alone such self-expression and self-realization is possible. As a result, I find that no real liberty and happiness is possible for the individual unless the basis of the administration is democratic in character and society is organized in accordance with those social and economic doctrines which constitute socialism in practice. This means that while rejecting the materialist basis of Marxist philosophy, I accept, very

largely, the materialist interpretation of history and, practically in their entirety, the principal items of the Marxian socio-economic programme. I cannot within the compass of this little book, much less in the course of these prefatory remarks, discuss these philosophical questions in any detail. I must, therefore, confine myself to the bare statement that I find no difficulty in reconciling socialism with the *vedanta*; in fact, it is my conviction that, in the circumstances obtaining today, socialism is the logical outcome of Shankara's *advaita*. The world will know no peace till all life, individual and communal, is moulded along these lives. The great curse of modern civilization is its utter lack of a philosophic basis. There is no plan because there is no goal, no goal because there is no generally accepted conception of Reality. The inner contradictions of such a purposeless scheme of things, if it can be called a scheme are for ever-creating complex problems but these problems

are all treated and dealt with separately from one another. Thus the unhappy circle goes on: crisis follows crisis, till at last we find ourselves in the midst of the present devastating war. There is no guarantee that the peace which will follow it will not bring, in its train, another series of problems and crises, to be followed at last by another great catastrophe. No one who wishes well by humanity can be happy at this state of affairs. We in India suffer along with the rest of the world. And to add to the confusion, we have perplexing problems of our own. Today, we find ourselves plunged in the depths of despair and frustration. But this, we hope, is a passing phase. Victory will crown our efforts to win *swarajya* for the country. We must, therefore, look ahead so that the State in the Free India of tomorrow, the India of our dreams and hopes, shall indeed command and deserve the fullest service of which India's sons and daughters are capable.

It is in the hope that this book may, in some measure, be of help to those—and I hope that their number is not small—engaged in the study of these and allied questions that it is placed before the public. It was outside the scope of this little volume to draw up a constitution for the ideal State but I have attempted to lay down the principles and aims which must be kept in mind whatever constitution is adopted.

*Jalipa Devi, Benares* }  
*February 20, 1944* }

SAMPURNANAND

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# I

## THE PROBLEM

From the dawn of history, mankind has existed organized in States of one kind or another. There were more or less stable families even in the earliest ages of man's history and there must have been loose combinations, probably occasional, which, later, developed into septs, clans and tribes. The material and psychic elements which constitute human Society were undoubtedly present and a system of checks and counter-checks to control the vagaries of individuals was bound to have been evolved at an early stage but there was no regularly organized State, no individual or body of individuals whose function it was to perform any of the duties which appertain to the State.

But pre-historic Society soon outgrew its primitive simplicity and the complicated relationships into which even uncivilized

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man had to enter with his fellows, near home and at a distance, involving such diverse transactions as war and peace, barter, disputes about watering-places, property rights, blood-feuds, and the innumerable problems created by sex, helped at last to evolve the State. Long, full of travail and human interest, rich in psychic experiences which mould our lives to this day, must have been the road which humanity traversed before it reached this point in its career and even after this lapse of time, we can piece together some parts of the history of that great march but, for all practical purposes, we first come across man, the kind of man we know today, as the citizen of a State, however loosely knit its organization. The Australian Bushman and an enlightened resident of one of the Western democracies meet on common ground here.

There are individual exceptions, to be sure. There are people who voluntarily renounce membership of Society and, consequently, of the State. There is no point



in counting among the citizens of the State, within whose territorial jurisdiction he happens to find himself, the man who, in response to a spiritual call, takes up the life of a forest anchorite. Normally every human being is a member of Society and every Society is linked up with a State. Even those who break laws and incur punishment would not vote, if the choice were intelligently placed before them, for the disappearance of Society and the State. The thief and the goonda know that the State protects their person and property even while it does not permit them to violate the person and property of others.

The reason why men will not willingly give up Society, of which the State is today one of the most important constituents, is that, outside Society, they find their lives incomplete. There is a sense of frustration. The microcosm is not, in all essentials, the same thing as the macrocosm. A molecule of water does not differ chemically from the water of all the seven seas put together, but

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you cannot have a storm and a shipwreck and all the other attendant physical and psychical phenomena in a molecule. Similarly, a man cut off from Society will have no scope, not only for hatred and jealousy, envy and egoism, but for love and altruism patriotism and self-abnegation either. It is only the currents and cross-currents that perpetually move across the surface of human Society, the conflict of wills and passions and personalities that bring out the qualities which are latent in us and make man truly human, in all the fulness of his nature.

And of Society, as I have stated above, the State is a most important constituent. The relation which should subsist, therefore, between the individual and the State is a subject of the most absorbing interest. While the theoretical basis of this relationship could be viewed from different angles of vision, and we shall refer to some of these in subsequent chapters, the nature of the relationship itself was comparatively simple in

early times. The State did not aspire to be much more than a police State. It undertook to preserve law and order within and to guarantee protection from foreign aggression. Individual rulers might take on a few more duties, encouragement of art and scholarship, for instance, but, ordinarily, the State left these and other things to take care of themselves. Preservation of law and order involved the maintenance of law courts and the upholding of a system of laws, based on a greater or lesser rationalization of the existing customs and traditions of the community. Generally, also, the State lent its support to some theocratic system which, in its turn, supplied it with the necessary sanction for its acts. Society was feudal in its structure and economy mainly agricultural; life and the machinery for regulating it was, therefore, predominantly static. In an environment like this, it was not so very difficult for the individual to pick his way. The State did not do much for him and did not expect him to do much in return. The

laws were few and simple: he could understand the rationale of most of them. For the rest, he was free to do very much what he liked. Of course, there were periods which put a great strain on his loyalty. Pecuniary exactions, religious persecution, general oppression were there. They were the exception, not the rule, and were either silently borne in the hope of more normal times to come or actively opposed. Opposition, after all, was not a very difficult matter when the armaments at the command of the State were hardly more formidable than those possessed by the ordinary citizen.

All this has changed now. The State is no longer merely a police State. It has generally succeeded in emancipating itself from all official connection with a Church but, in other directions, the sphere of its activities has considerably widened. It regulates marriage and inheritance; it controls education, art and literature; it looks after public health and provides recreation; it supervises trade and industry and, not

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unoften, is itself something of a trading or banking corporation. In a hundred ways, it impinges upon the life of the individual.

The individual also leads a much more complicated life than was known to his forbears a few generations ago. He has innumerable capacities, some of which seem to clash with one another. To take an example from current Indian politics, we find individuals who, as Hindus and Muslims, have been attacking each other tooth and nail from the platforms of their respective communal organizations, fraternizing because they both happen to be zamindars or members of the Kisan Sabha. Two members of an international body like the Buddhist Church or a Society for the Propagation of Art find themselves intimately connected with rival and hostile trading corporations. And all this complication is increased a hundred-fold by the rivalries of States and the demand made by the State upon the moral and material resources of the citizen.

It is absolutely necessary, if humanity is to retain its sanity, that the relationship between the Individual and the State should be worked out upon a rational basis, instead of being a perpetual tug-of-war. The State implies a Government and a people, the governed. The one could not exist without the other. Acts of the State are, therefore, as much acts of the rulers as of the ruled and the public has to shoulder the fullest responsibility for whatever is done in its name, *i. e.*, in the name of the State. But, in practice, acts of the State are acts of the Government. It is, therefore, the duty, no less than it is the right, of the individual to know why, how and in what circumstances the State truly represents him and why and to what extent he has to take upon himself the responsibility, and face the consequences, of what is done in the name of the State. If these questions can be satisfactorily answered, the rights and duties of the individual *vis-a-vis* the State will have been determined

and one of the foundations of a stable Society truly laid.

This question can be studied at length in a historical perspective but I do not propose in this book to give a review of all the views propounded by various writers at different times but to pass on, after a brief statement of some important theories which have occupied a prominent place in political thought, to what I consider to be the correct interpretation of Indian political philosophy based on the Vedanta, in the light of modern conditions.

## II IDEALISM

Among the many theories which have been propounded with a view to answer the questions put forward in the previous chapter, Idealism easily holds the first place, not because it comes first in order of time but because great scholars have helped to build it up and it has, without a doubt, influenced even those who belong to other schools of thought. What is no less important, it has been the fortunate recipient of the tacit, if not active, support of influential States or, which comes to the same thing in actual practice, their Governments.

Those days are gone when the head (or the Government) of a State could say *L'etat C'est moi*—The State, it is I. Nor can a modern Government, in spite of the curious fact that almost every Government claims for itself the special protection and guidance of Providence, quote *Manu* in its support,



where he says 'नाविष्णुः पृथिवीपतिः': 'Navishnuh prithivi-patih'—there is no king (or Government) who is not a manifestation of Vishnu. Much as they would like to do so, Governments today dare not say that they are not responsible and accountable for their actions before any human authority. And yet every administration which has passed the purely dictatorial stage requires some philosophical support for the authority which it wields. A sound philosophical theory should be one that can commend itself to followers of all religions and to those who follow none and, above all, it should be capable of making an appeal not only to the trained intellect of the scholar but to the imagination of the common man.

It should be borne in mind that those who evolved and developed the Idealist theory were not politicians or State officials. They were scholars who were not interested in upholding Governmental high-handedness. It is true enough that Hegel, the father of this system, was profoundly affected by the

political environment in which he found himself. He saw a Germany, torn by internal dissensions and ruined by the Napoleonic wars. He wished to see it happy and prosperous once more. This desire, so natural in the circumstances, no doubt influenced his thought and the political theory he built up was availed of by the rulers of Germany, as it eminently fitted in with the purpose they themselves had in view. Indeed, it soon travelled beyond the confines of Germany. But the chief interest of Hegel himself lay not in politics but in philosophy and his theory of the State can be treated as a corollary of his metaphysics.

This book is not a treatise on metaphysics but I feel that an understanding of the elements of Hegelian metaphysics is necessary to an understanding not only of Hegel's political philosophy but of certain other systems as well. I shall, therefore, attempt a brief exposition of the system in a form which, while it faithfully represents the substance of Hegel's thought, presents it in

a form familiar to students of Indian philosophy.

The evolution of the cosmos has taken place according to a process which Hegel, borrowing this and other terms from Greek logic, calls dialectical. This process has not been imposed by the volition of God or other Person, it is of the very nature, the inalienable nature, of that which is the substratum of the Universe. Take any object, at any instant of time. Its condition then is a thesis. But the next instant, or rather, at the very instant of observation, it takes on the opposite form, called the 'anti-thesis'. The next moment sees the birth, as a result of the inter-action of the thesis and the anti-thesis, of a new condition called the synthesis. This synthesis, acting as a thesis, gives rise to its own anti-thesis and a new synthesis and thus the process goes on. It is, of course, the total environment at any moment which helps to create the anti-thesis. In this way, every existing State carries within itself the fruits

of all previous states and the seeds of all States of the future. This evolutionary process is not confined to material objects ; it holds equally in the domain of our thoughts, feelings and volitions. The whole universe, therefore, is dialectical in its nature.

This is a bare outline and confined to a mere statement of the hypothesis. No more can be attempted, and no more is necessary, in this book. A word about the Hegelian conception of the nature of that substance which is the substratum of the Universe. It is of the nature of Pure Spirit. It is the eternal I. But a consciousness of the I involves as its necessary and inseparable anti-thesis, a consciousness of the not-I. The not-I may not have or possess an independent existence but it forms the background against which alone I-consciousness is possible. The Universe, in all its rich variety, is the extended synthesis, according to the dialectical process, of the I and the not-I, but, in any case, thought and thought.

forms would precede pure matter and material processes.

Revolutionary as this philosophic doctrine might have appeared in the West, we in India have long been familiar with it, in the form in which it forms a part of Shankara's Advaita. According to Shankara, the substratum of the Universe, material and spiritual is Brahma. Brahma is one, indivisible, unchanging. The one positive quality that can be posited of it is that it is Real, it exists, it is *sat*—that which is. For the rest, you can only say of it *neti, neti*, not this, not this. But there is also *maya*. *Maya* is *asat* (unreal, non-existent). It cannot be other than Brahma, for nothing other than Brahma exists, and yet it is different, for the unreal is surely different from the real. It is, therefore, truly the anti-thesis of Brahma. Their synthesis, says the Vedanta is *Ishwar* (God). God has His anti-thesis in the primeval *Para-Shakti*, which may be described as the summation of the power of cognition, affection and volition. Their

synthesis is the Individual Soul whose anti-thesis is *avidya* (nescience).

I do not wish to suggest for a moment that the philosophical systems of Shankaracharya and Hegel are the same but for their technical terms and methods of presentation. To make such an assertion, so unfair to the two systems alike, would be to slur over important facts. But I do wish to point out that a similar thought-current does run through both. In fact, some dialectical process is necessary to explain the existence and development of the Universe, if it is believed to have evolved out of a single, homogeneous substratum. This also explains why the Vedantist calls this world *mithya* (unreal). It is unreal, because it proceeds from *maya*—the not-I which has no existence other than as the anti-thesis of the Real Brahma, the existent I. But the Universe is not unreal at the moment of its being experienced, to the person experiencing it. He must, so long as he has not entirely

transcended his limitations, act towards it and in it as if it were real. This is an eminently sensible rule of conduct.

This brief, all too brief, account of the principles on which Hegelianism is founded ~~will~~ naturally have prepared us for the statement that the State like everything else, is subject to the law of dialectical evolution. Now a State comprises of a large number of individuals. Their combination constitutes the State. But there are combinations and combinations. A heap of bricks lying by the roadside is as much a combination as a house standing along the same road. The links and organs of a human being assorted together on the dissection table are in combination in a way just as are the same organs and limbs in the body of a live man. But, quite obviously, the two modes of combination are widely different from each other. In the one case, there is mere contiguity, in which every individual element retains its full individuality and is a self-contained unit. In the other case, there is

organic unity. The combining units may retain a certain limited individuality, but they are joined together by a common purpose. They have a meaning and significance, not *as* individuals, but only in so far as they contribute to the life, the meaning and ~~the~~ significance of the whole. Any unit standing out by itself, any over-developed organ, would be treated as a deformity and, possibly, even lopped off. One feature of such a combination is that it appears to develop a personality of its own which is quite distinct from and not merely the arithmetical sum of, the personalities of its constituents. A heap of one thousand bricks may be no more than one thousand bricks but a house functions as no mere heap of bricks ever can function. To use the age-old example, so familiar to students of Indian philosophy, the combination of betel-leaf, betel-nut, lime and *kattha* produces the peculiar taste which is not present singly in any of these and is a unique thing in itself, not analysable into the separate tastes of these ingredients. This



peculiar resultant of an organic combination may be called its over-soul or Group-soul.

Now men also combine in various ways. The chowk of an Indian city presents the spectacle of one type of combination ; a big *mela* like the Kumbha at Allahabad presents another. A school is a third type and a State is a fourth. The people passing along a busy street are just discrete individuals brought together by the accident of geographical proximity, but a *mela* is a loose organization, although of a very transient nature. A school has a fairly stable personality ; it has its traditions and memories and very often a method of thinking, feeling and acting which serves to distinguish it from similar institutions. But the State is an organic combination, *par excellence*. Details like forms of Government and territorial jurisdiction may change but the State seems to live for centuries. It feels aggrieved and insulted, grateful and jubilant, as the occasion demands, it accepts and confers

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favours, it thinks and acts. If ever a combination can be considered to be endowed with a personality and a soul of its own, the State is that combination. This State soul acts in and through the men and women who constitute the State and transcends their individual souls.

This being admitted, it follows, as a matter of course, that the life of the individual has no meaning and significance apart from the life of the State. It has no less, but certainly no more, importance than the life of a single cell in the human body. Its happiness lies in the happiness of the State and it will have to be sacrificed, if the necessity should arise, for the welfare of the State. The individual should undergo this sacrifice willingly in the knowledge that in the welfare of the State, and consequently in this sacrifice, lies his own true welfare. So long as he considers himself in opposition to the State and his own good as different from the good of the State, he will be a

misfit in the body politic and a source of unhappiness to himself and others. He will be truly himself to the extent that he is able to identify himself with the State.

If this is so, then the individual can do nothing which will be against the interest of the State, for to do so would be to injure his own true interest. This implies that everyone's volition will be in unison with the will of the State and the individual will see in every act of the State, in every law promulgated by the State, a reflection of his own will. Even if he did not happen to think along those lines previously, he should perceive, after the State has acted, that he himself was in favour of just that particular course of action.

But this seems flatly to contradict the everyday experience of everyone of us. There are acts of the State which we heartily approve of, others towards which we are neutral, and there are some to which we cannot reconcile ourselves. They seem to

us to be definitely against our interests and we cannot possibly admit that, in so far as they are concerned our will is identical with the will of the State.

This objection cannot be lightly brushed aside. The idealist meets it with the assertion that in everyone of us there is a higher and lower self. The higher self represents, according to him, our real will. This real will is pure and impartial. The lower self, on the other hand, which is represented by our apparent will, is fickle, because it is swayed by transitory emotions, likes and dislikes, and is clouded by nescience, our want of full knowledge. Normally, it is this lower self which functions, this apparent will which guides our actions. Hence, we are unable to recognize our true interests and to act in such a way as to further them. As our knowledge grows and self-control increases, we rise above the limitations that circumscribe the self and the will, and the distinction between two selves and two wills

tends, gradually to disappear. In the meantime, it is this real will in everyone of us which is identical with the will of the State. Cognizant of the individual's true interests which are in no way different from the interests of the State, the higher self can only will what the State itself wills. Only, it is latent in most of us. If they but knew it, the real will of the burglar and the murderer supports those laws which their apparent wills consider so iniquitous. Of course, it requires a long process of training to recognize one's true will. As Bosanquet says: "In order to obtain a full statement of what we will, what we want at any moment must at least be corrected and amended by what we want at all other moments; and this cannot be done without also correcting and amending it so as to harmonize it with what others want, which involves an application of the same process to them. But when any considerable degree of such correction and amendment had been gone through, our

own will would return to us in a shape in which we should not know it again.”\*

But such a process, however interesting, will take time and probably no one will be able to complete it in his own life. In other words, probably no one will be able so completely to recognize his true will as to experience its identity with the will of the State. What is, then, the ordinary citizen to do when faced with a situation in which he finds himself unable to accept the propriety of an act of the State? The Idealist would advise him to obey quietly, for thereby he would be following his own real will. To try to oppose the State would be a suicidal act.

This is a brief resume of the Hegelian theory of the relationship that subsists or should subsist between the individual and the State. It deserves the most serious consideration. But whatever its intrinsic merits, it has commended itself to ambitious

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\*Bernard Bosanquet in *The Philosophical Theory of the State*.

rulers in a way which no other system has done. It raises the State to the position of a mystic, impersonal substance with which the individual, like the initiate in Yoga, is asked to seek atonement. Without holding out the promise of a reward in Heaven or a chastisement in Hell, it provides the sanction which can exact unflinching obedience. The mediæval ruler in Europe was amenable to the discipline of the Church which interpreted the will of God ; Hindu and Muslim rulers were not free to go beyond the prescriptions of the Veda or the Quran ; but the Hegelian State is responsible to nothing but the law of its own being. The individual citizen, moreover, with the necessary schooling, can be made to feel a sense of exaltation in being the member of such a mystic personality and with such a mentality can be made to undergo almost any sacrifice in its name. Obedience is no longer a necessary evil, a burden, it is a source of active pleasure as it means the fulfilment of one's own life.

The particular form of Government does not matter, although it is naturally much easier for one individual or a small group of more or less irremovable individuals to symbolize the State.

Let us now examine some of the assumptions underlying this theory. I have already pointed out that we do not experience the identity of our wills with the will of the State. What reason is there for not believing this universal experience? It is perfectly true that a man's mental make-up, his general reactions to the world outside, will change with increase in knowledge, introspection and practice of self-control. It is equally true that sensible men realize that their own interests are best served by subordinating them to the general interest, and personal observation and reflection have taught us that the State is an institution which generally serves the public well and deserves support. But to come to this conclusion is not the same thing as to admit



that in everyone of us there are simultaneously at work two wills, one of which the real will, is entirely identical with the will of the State and thus, identical with the Real Wills of all our fellow-citizens; there appears to be no warrant for such an assumption. In most modern States there are both Capitalists and Socialists. While every individual capitalist and socialist wishes his own good, he, no doubt, also wishes the good of his own group in which, he has convinced himself, lies the good of Society, of mankind, as a whole. Each group has its own conception of good as well, and the two conceptions are, apparently, contradictory. What ground is there for believing that the real wills of the two groups meet on some common ground? Or again, would there be any justification for the assertion that, deep down in the mind of every Jew living in Germany there is a real will which applauds the steps taken by the Nazi State in its dealings with the Jewish community?

And what is this will of the State, stripped of all metaphysical trappings ? We speak of the honour of the family and the phrase has a definite meaning but this does not imply the existence of a person named 'the family, except in a purely legal sense, as apart from its members. The will of the State, at any moment, is the will of the rulers of the State, the Government, whatever the form of administration. It may be a justifiable assumption that the rulers have a wider outlook, a clearer grasp, than the ordinary citizen and are less exposed to those temptations which sway the judgments of lesser men. But even so, they are not ethereal beings, or philosophical concepts, but human beings, subject to the frailties of the flesh and not omniscient. The will of the State, then, as the will of its rulers cannot be perfect and the more they are freed from responsibility to the general public and the necessity for paying heed to popular criticism, the less will it reflect the general will or the will of the more enlightened

section of the populace. Power has its own logic. The rulers will tend to become an oligarchy whose aim will be to keep power concentrated in their own hands and in the hands of their successors and their group, whether it is an economic class or a political party. It is idle to assert that the will of all sections of the population can, at all times, be really identical with the will of their rulers.

What again is the good of the State, what are its interests, as distinct from the demonstrable good and interests of the constituent citizens? Where the interests of one group clash with those of another, the minority will have to subordinate its wishes to those of the majority. It may be that if the minority controls the machinery of administration, the interests of the majority may be sacrificed. In either case, the interests of the State will be seen to coincide with those of one group or another inside the body politic. There will be times when the vast majority of the people will be able

freely to lend their support to the State, as they will perceive that their interests will best be served by doing so. But the State cannot be said to have any interests which are neither the interests of a majority nor of a minority nor the visible interests of the whole people. In such a context, the term can only be the name of those wishes of the rulers of the State which they do not wish to submit to the test of public criticism or approval, which, they know, would not win spontaneous support, on their merits.

It is clear, therefore, that the criterion of the propriety of an act is not that it is performed by the State but that it is acceptable to our reason. The individual cannot take upon himself the responsibility for any public act, merely because it is supposed to express the will of the State.

It is often urged by the protagonists of this theory that we must not judge it from the behaviour of actual States and rulers. History has not so far evolved the ideal State

and there have been unfortunate lapses in the conduct of the best-known rulers. This apologia need not detain us long. The ideal State, if and when it materializes, will, no doubt, have ideal rulers and ideal citizens and, quite conceivably, there will be a perfect identity of will between the individual and the State. But till that day comes, no merely theoretical considerations will or should make the ordinary citizen sacrifice his own independent judgment.

Throughout this chapter, it may be noted I have used the word State in the sense of a political organization, comprising of rulers and ruled, a Government and a body of citizens. It is only in this sense that terms like the will of the State, or an act of the State or State property can have a determinate meaning and the individual can be called upon to determine his attitude towards the State. But the word has frequently been used in a much wider sense. Bosanquet, for instance, says: "It is not merely the political fabric, but it is the entire heirarchy

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of institutions by which life is determined, including, for example, the family, the trade union, the church, the University. It is the structure which gives life and meaning to them all". Hegel grows positively lyrical in speaking about it. To quote but a few of his observations: "The State is the Divine Idea as it exists on earth"; "All the worth which the human being possesses, all spiritual reality he possesses only through the State". "The State is the spirit which stands in the world and realizes itself therein consciously.....The existence of the State is God's movement in the world," or finally "it is its own end. It is the ultimate end which has the highest right against the individual, whose highest duty is to be a member of the State". This last sentence, called from his *Philosophie des Rechts*, may be taken to express the epitome of Hegel's views on this subject.

### III

## MARXISM

Of the many solutions proposed to the problem we are discussing, one of the most important is that suggested by Marxism. Its importance lies not only in the fact that it is an integral part of the political philosophy of the U. S. S. R., a state embracing within its territorial jurisdiction such a large part of the globe, but in the no less significant fact that in one form or another scientific socialism is engaging the serious attention of thoughtful people all over the world. For obvious reasons, the practical applications of socialist theory are more widely appreciated and known than the theory itself; in India, for instance, to the vast majority of the people socialism means little more than the destruction of the capitalist and zemindari systems and probably, the equalization of all incomes. I know a gentleman, and presumably he

represents a type, who believes that socialism also includes in its programme the nationalization of women. But comparatively very few people have cared to study Marxist philosophy. It may be pointed out, in passing, that the socialist's object in studying philosophy is different from the object other people have in view when doing so. To the ordinary Vedantist the study of philosophy is a step in the direction of attaining *moksha*, liberation ; the ordinary intellectual in the West finds in it a source of intellectual satisfaction ; but the Marxist uses it as the means which will enable him to change the world.

It is not necessary for the purposes of this book to write an elaborate thesis on the basic principles of Marxist philosophy. This philosophy is dialectical in its structure like Hegelianism on which, indeed, it is based in this respect. It lays down that the universe is true in the sense that it exists, it is a unity as regards its substratum, and that it is in a perpetual state of flux. At



any point of time, the condition of any object under observation is one of equilibrium of various contrary and contradictory forces. Every moment one of these forces or tendencies grows stronger than the rest, the stability or equilibrium is destroyed and a fresh equilibrium established at a different level. Changes may be merely quantitative, but a stage comes when quantity changes into quality and we get a new substance altogether. Thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis,—thus the endless process goes on. There is no beginning and no end to it. As Engels says : “The basic thought that the world does not consist of complete and fully fashioned objects but is an assemblage of processes, in which the objects, seemingly unchangeable, equally with the copies of them made inside the head (notions), are undergoing incessant changes, arising here and disappearing there—this basic thought has, since the time of Hegel, become so widely diffused throughout the general consciousness, that hardly any one will now venture to dispute it in

its general sense.”\* And again, “For the dialectic philosophy, nothing is ever established for all time, absolute or sacred. On everything it sees the stamp of an inevitable decline, to which all things are subject save the unceasing process of formation and destruction, of unending progression from the lower to the higher.”\* So far we have only an exposition of orthodox dialectics but the point of departure from Hegel’s doctrine comes with the description of the nature of that which is undergoing this ceaseless change, the stuff of which this world is made. Hegel says it was spirit. But Marx and Engels, the fathers of Marxism, call it matter. The difference lies not only in the name but in the fact that matter is, pre-eminently, insentient. The existence of the intellect, of consciousness and emotions and volition, is not denied but these things are bye-products of matter evolved from it at a comparatively late

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\*The excerpts from Engels in this chapter are mostly from his thesis ‘Anti-Dühring.’

stage. Again to quote Engels from Anti-Duhring: "The unity of the world consists not in its existence, but in its materiality. Motion is the form of existence of matter. Never and nowhere has there been matter without motion or motion without matter... If we inquire what thought and consciousness are, whence they come, we find that they are products of the human brain, and that man himself is a product of nature, developing in a known natural environment and together with it. Obviously, the products of the human brain are, in the last analysis, products of nature ; they do not conflict, but harmonize, with the continuity of nature". It was, then, the environment which led to the evolution of the human body which also led to the evolution of the human intellect and it is environment which, according to the unfaltering law of dialectics, is producing those changes in the consciousness which idealists would be prone to regard as a sort of unfoldment of the latent qualities of the personality. As

Engels writes : "Hegel was an idealist, that is to say, for him the thoughts in our heads were not the more or less abstract reflections of real things and processes, but on the contrary things and processes were, for Hegel, the reflections of ideas existing somewhere before the creation of the world." The question whether the human will is free is answered by Marx in these words : "Necessity is blind until it becomes consciousness. Freedom is the consciousness of necessity". It is for this reason that Marxist philosophy is called Dialectic Materialism to distinguish it from Idealism which might aptly be called Dialectic Spiritualism.

Now this process does not stop with individuals but permeates the lives of groups, small and large. It is the objective world which largely determines the subjective world. History is the result not of the interplay of the genius, the free wills, of great thinkers, rulers or soldiers, but of the interplay of material forces to which

these heroes were subject no less than others. These forces are primarily economic. Not that men are consciously motivated by economic considerations in all their actions, but the sentiments which inspire them are themselves conditioned by economic factors. In *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* Marx gives a very lucid exposition of this conception: "In the social production which human beings carry on, they enter into definite relationships which are determined, that is to say, independent of their will,—productive relationships which correspond to a definite evolutionary phase of the material forces of production. The totality of these productive relationships forms the economic structure of Society, the real basis upon which a legal and political superstructure develops and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production of material life determines the general character of the social, political and intellectual processes of life. It is not the

consciousness of human beings that determines their existence but, conversely, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of Society come into conflict with the existing productive relationships or (to express the matter in legal terminology) with the property relationships within which they have hitherto moved. These relationships which have previously been developmental forms of the productive forces, now become metamorphosed into fetters upon production. A period of social revolution then begins. Concomittantly with the changes in the economic foundation, the whole gigantic superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. When we contemplate such transformations, we must always distinguish, between, on one hand, the material changes in the economic conditions of production, changes which can be watched and recorded with all the precision proper to natural science, and on the other

the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophical forms (in a word, the ideological forms) in which human beings become aware of this conflict and fight it to an issue. Just as little as we form an opinion of an individual in accordance with what he thinks of himself, just so little can we appraise a revolutionary epoch in accordance with its own consciousness of itself; for we have to explain this consciousness as the outcome of the contradictions of material life, of the extant conflict between social productive forces and productive relationships." This, in brief outline, is what is understood by the materialist conception of history. It will readily be seen that it does not deny to the human mind its share in guiding human destiny. Minds and thoughts are as much a part of the environment as steam-engines and machine-guns; only they are not independent entities, moulding the affairs of men, like some *Deus ex machina*. A true leader of men is a person who is able to make

almost intuitively a dialectical analysis of the situation, objective and subjective, around him and is thus in a position to give things a push, if one may so put it, in the direction in which they are already tending to move.

The Marxist attitude towards the State is derived from this general thesis. In every State, which has so far existed, there have been economic classes. An economic class is thus defined by Bukharin in his *Historical Materialism*: "A class is a category of persons united by a common role in the productive process, a totality in which each member has about the same relative position with regard to other functions in the productive process." There has thus always existed a class which owned the principal means of production. There was a time when all production centred round the land; today, capital holds that proud place, controlling the machinery not only of the production but also of the distribution of wealth. Naturally, this



class which controls real wealth occupies the position of greatest influence in Society. It wishes to keep this advantage in its own hands. With this end in view, it takes under its own direction the machinery of the State. During the old feudal days, the owners of land generally took a direct hand in the administration; today, the capitalist finds it more convenient to pull the wires from behind. But, in any case, the State becomes an organization to uphold the privileges of a particular class. It may be perfectly impartial as between members of other classes but all its efforts are directed to the task of keeping the position of the privileged class unassailed. The stately machinery of the law is set in motion with this principal object in view and force loses its nakedness when invoked in the name of law and order. In the words of Bukharin: "State and law are in reality the products of class Society." It is for this reason that Lenin says that "the State is a monopoly of violence."

Now this state of affairs will continue so long as there are economic class distinctions, a class of exploiters and a class of the exploited, the haves and the have-nots, as they are also called. People accuse socialists of trying to incite class war. The accusation is wrong. The socialist merely draws attention to the class conflicts which inhere in Society and make life a perpetual tug-of-war. He desires that these conflicts should cease. But this will be possible only when Society ceases to be based on the exploitation of one class by another. This in its turn implies the abolition of the private ownership of the means of production and its replacement by a system of social ownership. Social ownership of the means of distribution will follow, as a matter of course. This will provide an absolutely new basis for the organization of Society. There will not be equality of wages but absence of exploitation, work and food for all, from each according to his capacity, to each according

to his needs;—to quote the well-known aphorism, an equality of opportunities. Freed from those sordid restraints which dwarf the intellect and cripple the soul, man will rise to his full spiritual stature; able and willing to contribute his all to the welfare of the community.

The State will, under these conditions, cease to be an instrument of class oppression, for there will be no classes to oppress. But it will have other functions to perform. It will have to co-ordinate the activities of the various organizations which will constitute Society, to guide, to supervise, to educate, to make necessary adjustments. The anti-social activities of individuals who are unable to fit themselves into the new order will have to be checked; the products of the country will have to be exchanged with the produce of other lands and foreign aggression will have to be guarded against. All this envisages a state of affairs which really falls short of that ideally socialist State which is called com-

munism, but it is a necessary step in that direction. Full-fledged socialism is, really, not possible unless this preparatory stage is reached by the major portion of the civilized world. This presupposes a great, and at present unattainable, advance in culture, knowledge and social consciousness, and a degree of international organization and co-operation that appears in this age of cut-throat competition to be an utopian dream. If and when, that day comes, the State will have nothing left for it to do. It will simply wither away and lose itself in Society.

This brief outline should give an idea of the socialist's attitude towards the State. He looks upon it as an instrument which is mainly used by the possessing classes for oppressing and keeping under their heels the great mass of the people who are, more or less, among the exploited. He cannot, therefore, bring himself to look upon it as a sort of impersonal divinity whose will is, in some mysterious way, an

expression of his own true will. Such a phrase has no meaning for him. He refuses, except under compulsion, to take responsibility for all its acts. But he does not desire to do away with its existence as such, although he is tenacious about his right to rebel. He is not an anarchist. He wishes to control the machinery of the State, so that it may become a real instrument of the social weal. To this end, he wishes to capture power. When this object has been achieved and the State has ceased to be attached to any particular class, when it really represents the whole people, then indeed, can he give it his whole-hearted allegiance. Then his interests will become identical with the interests of the State, which he will obey and serve, not because it is a sort of mystic over-soul, but because through such service, he can rise to the full height of his humanity and give full expression to his personality. This attitude is based on personal experience and is an expression of what might be called

the individual's enlightened self-interest. This is why he can contemplate with equanimity the vision of a day when the State will, no longer, exist. It will, no longer, be a necessary element in human progress. The individual will have outgrown the State as the adult outgrows his swaddling clothes.

Such, in outline, is the socialist conception of the relationship between the State and the individual. I do not, personally, subscribe entirely to Marxist philosophy. I believe that Shankara's Advaita-vada is a better exposition of the Universe and its evolution than Dialectic Materialism. Holding this view as I do, I feel that the theory of Historical Materialism ought to be modified so as to find room for the forces of the spirit, if I may use this term to denote not only that non-matter which along with matter forms the warp and woof of the Universe but that substance whose essence is the potentiality of consciousness, which manifests itself simultaneously as

subject and object. But with this very important reservation, I am free to say that no other theory has succeeded in giving anything like a consistent explanation of historical evolution and the Marxist conception of the State appears to offer an eminently sound basis for determining the relationship that should subsist between the Individual and the State.

## IV

### PLATO'S SOLUTION

Plato's philosophic ideas have profoundly influenced thought in the West, and both Christian and Islamic Theology have freely incorporated some of his propositions into their metaphysical systems. According to him, this world which we know through our senses, a world which is perpetually changing, is not real. Behind it is another world, of which the former, the outer world, is a pale reflection. The elements which constitute that true world are called by him ideas. They are immutable. What is true and immutable possesses order; on the other hand, there is disorder in what is false and changing. Again, what is false is misleading, unreliable, harmful. The reverse holds in the case of that which is true. Hence, the noumenal world, the world of ideas, is not only true, it is good and beautiful. In the phenomenal world, on



the other hand, we can catch only faint and transitory glimpses of the underlying truth; beauty and goodness. The human soul is immortal. It is fitted, in every way, to experience the ideal world but is prevented from doing so by the limitations at present imposed upon it by the intellect, which is for ever running after objects of sense, for ever grovelling in the domain of space and time. If that other world is to be sensed, the intellect must be turned inward. But introspection requires an incessant exercise of self-control, or life-long discipline.

The world of Society should be so moulded as to help the seeker after truth in this effort, and individual life also arranged with that object in view. Among the various agencies which bring about the realization of this aim is the State. It can guide and control individual as well as corporate life. It is more potent than any other similar instrument, because its influence extends to every individual within its terri-

torial limits. The State, on this view, becomes a vast educational institution. The success of this institution will depend, says Plato, upon the degree to which the individual is able to subordinate himself to it. He should leave himself entirely in its hands, obey it unquestioningly. Thus alone can the State function efficiently and effectively.

The obvious objection is that subjection to the will of the State will, in effect, mean subjection to the will of its rulers who will, in all probability, be no more paragons of self-control and knowers of the truth than the ordinary citizen. Plato foresees this objection. His solution is that eminent philosophers should be selected as rulers. People of this type do not, as a rule, wish to mix themselves up with the unedifying business of administration, but, says Plato, unless they do so, they must be prepared to have themselves and others governed by bad, selfish men. They must, therefore, shoulder this burden in the public interest. To save

them from falling into temptation, Plato ordains that they should not possess any private property and should be free from all domestic responsibilities. Their personal needs should be met from public funds.

In certain respects, there is a certain amount of similarity between the positions taken up by Hegel and Plato, but there is a wide gulf which separates the outlooks of the two systems. Hegel would have it that the State is everything and the individual has no significance by himself. Plato, on the other hand, makes the individual the centre of the scheme ; the State exists for his sake and has a value only in so far as it serves his real interest.

It is a debatable point how far the State can, through its laws and regulations, make men self-controlled, sincere seekers after the truth, free from the frailties of the flesh, men who are really laws unto themselves. It is equally to be doubted if it will be possible in any State to get a succession

of really selfless men, philosophers in the full sense of the term, to look after the administration. It is for this reason, among others, that this theory has never had the chance of being put to the test of practical application.

## V

### ST. PAUL, HITLER AND BHISHMA

In the preceding chapters, I have described some of the principal schools of thought. But there have been other thinkers, some of whose observations are illuminating and stimulate thought. I begin with the apostle St. Paul. He says: "The State is the minister of God for good. . . . The law is the school-master to bring us to Christ." With this may be contrasted the opinion of Prince Kropotkin, the great Anarchist, according to whom, "Law is simply an instrument invented for the maintenance of exploitation and the domination of the idle rich over the toiling masses. Its sole mission is the perpetuation of exploitation." A Congress of State Socialists was held at Eisenach in 1872. In the terms of the memorial drawn up for the Congress by Prof. Schmoller, the State is "a great moral institution for the educa-

tion of humanity, it should be animated by a high moral ideal" which would "enable an increasing number of people to participate in the highest benefits of civilization."

Today we are face to face with the phenomenon of the Totalitarian State. The motive force behind the State is called Fascism in Italy, Nazism or National Socialism in Germany. These two movements really started without much political philosophy behind them. They were an expression of the discontent felt by the masses in these two countries as an aftermath of the last War and the conditions created by it and the peace treaties which formally ended it. They aimed at little more than national solidarity, economic prosperity and a restoration of national self-respect. Demands for territorial expansion followed almost as a natural consequence because in these days of capitalism and imperialism, exploitable overseas possessions appear essential to economic well-

being and full-fledged nation-hood. As each nation has its own problems to solve and the only criterion of success, is national aggrandisement, there cannot be much of a political theory or internationalism about such policies. As Mussolini once observed, Fascism is not an article of export. Every State must develop its own type of Fascism. There are certain common elements, however. The type of Government in Germany, Japan, Italy and their satellites is dictatorial. The State is in practice, if not avowedly, Hegelian. It embraces every aspect of national life and claims unquestioning obedience from the citizen. The will of the State is supreme and is expressed through the Head of the State who, representing as he does in his own person the sovereign people, is the fountain-head of the Law. In Germany,—and its lead may be followed elsewhere—the false doctrine of race purity has further complicated matters. This doctrine was thus described by Hitler himself in a speech delivered by

him in the German Reichstag on January 30th, 1937: "The greatest revolution which National Socialism has brought about is that it has rent asunder the veil which hid from us the knowledge that all human failures and mistakes are due to the conditions of the time and, therefore, can be remedied, but that there is one error which cannot be remedied once men have made it, namely, the failure to recognize the importance of conserving the blood and the race free from inter-mixture and thereby the racial aspect and character which are God's gift and God's handiwork. It is not for men to discuss the question of why Providence created different races, but rather to recognize the fact that it punishes those who disregard its work of creation." This is an example of that pseudo-Science and mendacious use of scientific knowledge which is infinitely worse than crude ignorance. The excesses committed in Germany in the name of Aryanism, the suppression of human personality on which Fascism



and Nazism depend for their success, ruthless disregard for the rights of other peoples as evidenced by Italy's rape of Abyssinia, Germany's strangulation of Czechoslovakia and Austria and Japan's murder of Korea, to give but three examples, are all matters of common knowledge and subjects of daily discussion. The war now going on will probably decide whether these conditions have come permanently to stay.

I have not said anything so far about Indian political theory. The reason is that the chapters which follow are based on what I believe to be the fundamentals of Indian philosophy. And, yet, it would not be out of place to give a brief outline of the system here.

As Bhishma says in the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata, in the beginning all men were equal: there was no Government and no State. But a state of affairs came into existence which threatened the very.

life of humanity upon the earth. This is characterized by the term *matsya nyaya*—men began to prey upon one another, as in the sea bigger fish feed upon the smaller. People then went to Manu and requested him to be their king. At first, he refused to take this great responsibility upon himself. Later, however, he was prevailed upon to do so on two main conditions, *viz.*, (i) that the people would pay him a certain proportion of their incomes, to meet the expenses of the administration and (ii) that they would render him unfailing obedience. Thus, the State came into existence. It will be seen that this theory bears considerable resemblance to Rousseau's theory of the social contract. The will of the State has to be obeyed. But rulers would be liable to commit mistakes being responsible only to themselves. For this reason the injunction was laid down that the king must be guided in all matters by the advice of the learned and the holy men who had retired from active worldly life for

study and austerities. These men who would be above all worldly temptations would be interpreting Dharma to the king. It should be understood, by the way, that Dharma does not mean religion. Its nearest equivalent in English would be 'duty.' Dharma does not imply any credo, any article of faith and an atheist can have almost as much to do with Dharma as an orthodox believer. The king, then, is an upholder of Dharma, as it has come down from time immemorial and amended, in accordance with the needs of the times, by those who are most fitted to do so, by virtue of their scholarship, self-discipline, and altruism. So long as the king acts in this way, he is entitled to the fullest obedience and is indeed a manifestation of the gods on earth. But when he strays from this path, he forfeits his claim to allegiance. The Mahabharata enjoins that such a king should be driven away as people chase away a mad dog from a village. There is a Pauranic story that all other means

having failed, the Rishis themselves did to death the oppressive king Vena. The purpose of the State is to help the individual along the path of virtue and it is entitled to allegiance only so long as it subserves this end. The ruler was expected, at every step, to act so as to keep his subjects satisfied, ranjanat raja, a king is he who can please his subjects and on every important occasion, the paura—janapad, the representatives of the cities and the countryside had to be consulted. Even the selection of the heir-apparent had to be ratified, and could be set aside, by this body.

## VI

### THE QUEST AFTER HAPPINESS AND FREEDOM

Politics is a science. It is true that the units with which it deals are not like those manipulated by the chemist. Two atoms of Oxygen may be trusted to behave exactly in the same way in a given set of circumstances, but this cannot be asserted of two insects. One cannot definitely say that even the same insect will repeat its behaviour, if the previous environment is again brought round. This unpredictability introduced by the factor of consciousness increases as we rise in the scale of existence to man. The reactions produced by the environment on different individuals differ owing to a variety of causes ; pre-genital influences, inherited tendencies, personal capacity, education and upbringing, physical health and subjective condition, all have their share. Why different

individuals should exhibit congenital differences in intellect and emotional tendency, strength of will and character is a debatable question. Hindu philosophy explains this diversity by invoking the law of Karma. I do not know any other theory that is even half so convincing. But be that as it may, the fact of the difference remains. All these things together create those elements of uncertainty which distinguish the sciences dealing with living things—politics among them—from the purely physical sciences. With this important reservation, I repeat that politics is a science. This being so, it is as much subject to the scientific method as any other science. Its general principles, for instance, cannot be *a priori* axioms arrived at intuitively. They can only be the result of a process of deduction based on the observation of a large number of relevant phenomena and verifiable by practical experience.

We find that men act from a variety of motives. They want money, they want

children., they want health, they want power, prestige and position : if they are religiously-minded they want spiritual felicity, which is variously called and defined according to the various systems. All these various motives which are manifestations of the acquisitive, the assertive, the sex and the other instincts of the ego, are divided by Indian philosophers into four main classes, artha, karma, dharma and moksha which may roughly be translated as preservation of life and economic well-being, conjugal love and domestic felicity, performance of the duties enjoined by one's inter-dependence upon other living beings, and self-realization. Some people run after one set of objects, some after another, but most people would like to have the best of everything in this world and the next. Seeing, however, that a simultaneous quest and enjoyment of all objects of desire is not physically possible, people decide to confine themselves to some one direction. Everyone desires his own suc-

cess ; few people are interested in seeing others thwarted and disappointed. It is only where he finds that his interests clash with those of some one else that the normal man begins actively to think of opposing that other.

Through all this multiplicity of motives and efforts there runs one common thread, the search for happiness. Wherever a man is, in whatever condition he is placed, he wants to be happy. Happiness is not merely the negation of un-happiness, not merely identical with pleasure or the absence of pain ; it is *sui generis*, a positive experience. Money, power, children, spiritual exaltation, heaven, all these are desired not for their own sake but for the happiness which their possession or enjoyment brings. If, for some reason, an object ceases to give happiness it becomes positively distasteful. Search for happiness, then, is what inspires all our bodily and mental activity. It is an unquenchable thirst, and men are prepared to suffer any amount of



discomfort with an ultimate view of satisfying it. It should be clearly understood that I am not here propounding some new variety of psychological hedonism. In the sense in which I use the word, a man is happy when he is most truly himself.

But it is not often that the quest is rewarded with success. There are two main reasons for this. One is that we do not know what constitutes happiness, or rather, we do not know what will really give happiness. Our ignorance of the world outside is profound ; our knowledge of the workings of our own mind abyssmal. The mind runs simultaneously after a hundred objects. We cannot possibly enjoy them all simultaneously, even if we possessed them, which very often we do not. So we try them one after another. But this too does not please. Generally pain comes from contact with that which was supposed to be a source of pleasure. Some objects lose all their interest even before their achievement, other begin to fall in the

moment of enjoyment, others again bring disillusionment after they have been experienced. The dissatisfaction remains. A fresh quest begins but there is no peace, no lasting happiness. The mind is oppressed by a dull, ever-present sense of frustration.

The *Vedanta* says that this Universe is Brahma which appears to us through the veil of *maya*, its non-existent and yet persistently adherent, because necessary, antithesis, as the world, spread infinitely in space and time, rich in myriad forms, sentient and insentient. Now *maya* may be false, but so long as it remains the world will continue to appear. It is better not to fall into the water but, if one does happen to slip, the most sensible thing to do is to admit this fact and swim out. It is no use crying that the world being the product of *maya* is false. The proper thing to do is to accept its existence for practical purposes and so to work as to remove the nescience which clouds the understanding.

As this envelope of ignorance gradually disappears, the illusion of the world will fade of itself. Bliss and pure intelligence is of the essence of the ego, but is buried under nescience. But the ego is not at ease in this condition. There is unrest, an incessant effort to realize itself, an endless struggle to free itself from the bondage that encompasses and compresses the personality and thus become fully itself. It is this unceasing effort that manifests itself as the search for happiness. Nothing satisfies, for nothing, no external object can give that freedom from oppressing bondage in which alone lies true happiness. That which destroys nescience is knowledge. What is wanted, therefore, if the search for happiness is to be crowned with success, is that there should be an arrangement for imparting knowledge and for removing those impediments which might interrupt its course.

Another difficulty is that in his search after happiness one man is constantly

colliding with another. It looks as if a sort of Malthusian law prevailed everywhere and the objects of enjoyment were far too few compared with those who wished to enjoy them. Everyone wishes to be free, *viz.*, unimpeded, to look after his own happiness in his own way, but this does not seem possible. People's paths seem to be cutting across one another and this leads to endless conflicts on the mental, no less than on the physical, plane.

According to the *Vedanta*, this desire for freedom is as natural as the desire for happiness. The Ego is by nature free ; it transcends space and time and all other limitation and yet it seems to be tied down by nescience and the bonds to which nescience gives birth. The quest for freedom is, therefore, like the quest for happiness, an effort at self-realization ; the desire to be one's one true self. With increase in knowledge, the possibility of conflict will, therefore, tend to grow less and less. When the veil of ignorance is completely gone,

there will be perfect freedom and all clash will disappear. When all is Brahma, who could come into conflict with whom ? But till that happy consummation is reached, we have to see to it that people do not wear themselves out in perpetual conflicts and so destroy the possibility of anyone being really free except in so far that some may possess an unbridled licence to do what they please. This means that arrangements will have to be made to let people enjoy controlled freedom.

There are some who feel that the common man is totally unfit to enjoy freedom and should be kept in perpetual leading strings. Only a few super-men are really worthy of exercising freedom. It is true, unfortunately, that men very often misuse liberty but it must be remembered that no one can learn properly to use an instrument unless he is allowed to handle it. Responsibility is the best training school for liberty, and the proper use of freedom will come through making mistakes. People

must, therefore, be permitted a large measure of freedom, but this freedom must be controlled and regulated so that all may enjoy it. An attempt to take away people's liberty cannot succeed for any length of time, for it is the Ego's nature to be free. If it is denied political and social freedom, it will strike out in other directions, socially less desirable and will, as if by way of vengeance, corrupt the characters of those who have sought to rob it of its birth-right.

The need, therefore, is to provide for a proper diffusion of knowledge and to set up a machinery for enabling everyone to enjoy the largest possible measure of freedom, compatible with the similar right of everyone else. Now, so far as education is concerned, there are schools and colleges and universities ; everyone of the institutions through which Society functions is a school, in a broad sense. For those who want knowledge not provided in these orthodox institutions, those who want to

probe into the mysteries, there are probably teachers, willing and eager to take them in hand. In any case, there appears to be ample, at any rate, an ever-increasing provision for imparting knowledge and the State is there to see that those who have to do this work are not compelled to stop it for lack of funds or for other equally remediable reasons. The great role of the State here is to remove impediments. It can also set the pace if it is inspired by a proper philosophic outlook. In the domain of liberty its function is, if anything, a more positive one. It is the one institution which co-ordinates the activities of most of the other social institutions. It provides the ultimate sanction for political, economic and social forces. It can, therefore, if it is so minded, ensure to every citizen a full measure of liberty.

In the chapters that follow we shall discuss some of those conditions which the State should create and maintain in order to perform this two-fold function satis-

factorily. We shall also have to discuss the extent to which the individual should submit to the authority of the State and the steps that should be taken to ensure the performance by the State of the tasks allotted to it. Finally we shall have to consider the circumstances, if any, in which the individual may be deemed to be absolved from his duty of allegiance to the State as symbolized by its Government.

It will be seen that the approach to the problem of the State made in this chapter is different from that of Idealism and Marxism. We start with the premise that the individual is an end in himself and self-realization the highest object at which man can aim. We have stated that the nescience which clouds man's true nature brings in its train an ever-recurring state of frustration and dissatisfaction which expresses itself as a perpetual quest after happiness and freedom and reveals itself in a hundred ways throughout life. The measure then, of the efficiency of State or



any other institution and the only justification for its existence will be the degree to which it helps man in his quest and succeeds in removing obstacles from his path.

## VII

### THE ESSENTIALS OF LIBERTY

We have seen that everyone wishes to be happy and free. It is galling to act in subjection to another's will, even if direct material gain is the result of such subjection. To try to take away a man's love of liberty is as futile as to try to deprive him of his soul. If repressed in one direction, it will make itself felt in another, possibly a less desirable, direction. Epochs characterized by a denial of political liberty have generally been noted for their sexual licentiousness. That appears to be the only escape for pent-up psychic energy, the only method of self-expression available in the circumstances. People must, therefore, be permitted the enjoyment of liberty.

A clear conception of what constitutes liberty is necessary. Laski thus defines the word in his *Grammar of Politics*: "By liberty, I mean the eager maintenance of

that atmosphere in which men have the opportunity to be their best selves." A man is his best self when he has had the opportunity to develop and utilize to the full whatever talents he possesses. A large number of people do not get such an opportunity. In the words of the poet :

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
The dark unfathomed caves of  
ocean bear,

Full many a flower is born to blush  
unseen,

And waste its sweetness on the  
desert air.

Many a man who might have been a valuable social asset remains a life-long liability to Society for lack of opportunity. And such men are victims to a chronic feeling of dissatisfaction with themselves and with things in general. This must not be. Barring those few unfortunate ones who are congenitally inclined towards anti-social activities,—and even

in these pathological cases it is worthwhile considering whether we cannot do anything better than shutting them up in prison,—normal men and women must get the opportunity to develop their talents. It is the conditions which would make this possible that Laski designates as liberty. It is not easy to decide what these conditions are. But looking at the matter from another side, one might say that the maintenance of favourable conditions depends upon the eradication of those that are unfavourable. An analysis of these social conditions without which it is not possible for a normal individual to be happy will give an idea of the restraints that must be removed and this, in its turn, will enable us to form a picture of what constitutes liberty. It will not be a complete picture, for liberty is something more than a merely negative experience, but nevertheless, it will suffice, as a working hypothesis.

I have spoken above of individual happiness. It is true that there are social

pleasures as well, in the sense that there are pleasures which can only be enjoyed in the Society of others. But even in these cases, everyone is directly conscious of his own enjoyment: other people's enjoyment is only a matter of inference. Even those who sacrifice themselves so that others might be happy find happiness in this very act of sacrifice. Hence, in the final analysis, it is the individual's happiness that really matters. Society is only a means to its attainment. If the individual is happy and free, the group of which he is a unit is, automatically, happy and free. If the restraints on individual happiness are removed, there will cease to be any restraints of a collective character. The removal of restraints from the individual creates a feeling of expansion, which is a positive experience.

One great restraint which we all resent is the interference of others with our work. An efficiently organized State effectively puts an end to this. Through its police

and courts, it keeps under control those whose unsocial tendencies urge them to interfere with other people's business and, on the slightest pretext, to take the law into their own hands, as we say. But the State can succeed in this only if it has the right, the generally-accepted right, to curtail the liberty, *i. e.*, the right to act according to his own wishes, of the individual in special circumstances. What those circumstances are should be definitely known to everyone. The individual should know when and where the State will step in to ask him to cry halt and give an account of his proceedings. In other words, the State must act according to Law, not according to its own sweet will.

The simplest working definition of Law is that it is a command accompanied by a sanction. 'Thou shalt not' is the form of the law and there is a definite threat of punishment in case of transgression. This makes the Law a creation of the State, an expression of its will and such law is not,

in all cases, something which the individual feels to be inherently right. The laws against theft may, so long as the existing notions about private property prevail, seem to most people to be rooted in human nature itself, but the same cannot be said about such injunctions as 'keep to the left.' There is an obvious element of arbitrariness in orders of this nature and even those which, on promulgation appear to be essential to the well-being of the community, are a product of the State's pleasure. It is, for this reason, that many people find themselves in the position taken up by Hobbes that "rights are claims recognized by the State." We wish to preserve our children and the State does not say 'no.' Thus we have a right to keep them. If tomorrow the State were to decree that every first-born child shall be done to death, our right to keep our first-born children would cease to exist.

This conception of rights is in accordance with modern practice but consideration will

show that it is not only narrow but fundamentally wrong. I occupy a certain place in Society which carries with it certain duties, howsoever humble. Unless I perform those duties, I cannot function as an efficient citizen and might, as well, not exist. But I cannot perform those duties except under certain favourable conditions. It is these conditions which constitute my right. A privilege or right which is not correlated to a function is unnatural and need not be respected. On the other hand, certain rights, namely, certain conditions without which a member of Society cannot fulfil the obligations appertaining to his position, are inalienable : the State has not created them, and it cannot take them away. One is, therefore, disposed to agree with Laski when he says : "Rights are those conditions of social life without which no man can seek, in general, to be himself at his best .....Rights, therefore, are prior to the State in the sense that, recognized or not, they are that from which the State derives



its validity". The Law, then, is not that which confers rights: it only recognizes them. It is with this clear notion of the Law that one will have to decide how far the State should have the power to interfere with our activities. All historical States have exhibited the tendency to widen the scope of interference till a day comes when such residuum of rights as is still left to the individual seems to owe its existence to the will of the State. Unremitting care is needed to restrain this tendency. As has been well said: "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

It is necessary, in the first place, that everyone should be able to get the education for which he is best fitted. Education is not mere literacy, though literacy is its necessary foundation. The person who appreciates the lessons of science and history, politics and economics, is the person who is fitted to succeed in the struggle for existence, and to contribute to the well-being of Society. To deny to anyone the educa-

tion for which nature has fitted him is to rob him of his birth-right and to do an incalculable harm to Society. Poverty should not be allowed to become a bar to the acquisition of knowledge. It is the duty of the State to see that no one is deprived of the benefits of education because of the accident of his birth in a particular caste or class, his religion or his sex or the poverty of his parents. A State which permits a section of the people to remain uneducated is perpetuating slavery. An uneducated man will always be the plaything of others. He will dance to their tune because of his inability to form his own opinions and evaluate what others say, at their proper worth. Such a man will drag others down with him and will be a source of embarrassment and harm to Society and the State. The clear duty of the State is, therefore, not only to remove obstacles from the path of those seeking knowledge but positively to help to raise, by all means in its power, the level of general knowledge, intelligence and culture. I

must emphasize, while on this subject, that the academic independence of seats of learning must not, on any account, be handed over to the Government. The subservience of men of knowledge ~~for~~ the politician is one of the greatest tragedies of our age.

The existence of a class claiming special privileges for itself cannot be permitted. The fact that a group of people consider themselves superior to all other men is, normally, of little interest to the State, but it must get its face sternly against any attempt to claim any special privileges, *e. g.*, weightage in the public services, or extra-numerical representation in public bodies, or trial in specially-constituted courts according to an exclusive code. These things concern the whole community. Nor can a poll-tax or living in ghettos be tolerated. Such privileges are never correlated to any corresponding and recognizable duties. Therefore, on the one hand, they demoralize, while they irritate, those who feel that they are being unjustly treated, on the other,

they corrupt those who find themselves in the enjoyment of a specially favourable situation which they have not earned through their own efforts. Society becomes a conglomerate of bullies and dissatisfied slaves, in which the members of neither group can function as normal free men. This is bad for the individual, but it is no less bad for Society. The State must, therefore, sternly oppose any recognition of claims involving the granting of special privileges to the members of any class within the community.

Freedom of thought is a great guarantee of liberty. The assertion that thought is always free is less than a half-truth. Thought is not free if its expression through speech and writing and association is not permitted. It is idle to deny the potency of ideas. The power of thought to influence human life, of the individual as of groups, is incomparably greater than that of overt acts. It is equally idle to deny that no attempt at suppressing ideas,

provided the ideas have something in them to inspire men, even if we consider these men to be abject victims of delusion, can ever succeed. No such attempt has succeeded in the past. The early history of Sikhism and Christianity is a record of martyrdom and sacrifice but persecution only added to the zeal and the numbers of their followers. Burning Bruno at the stake did not succeed in killing the new Astronomy. Where would Buddhism and Islam be if no new faith were ever allowed to be preached? The fact that the new thought is unfamiliar or appears subversive of the established order is not by itself conclusive condemnation. The safest course is to let the old ideology fight it out with the new, in the confidence that the one that is the more suitable to the existing circumstances will alone survive in the end or, else, a synthesis of the two will be arrived at on a higher plane. No one who has any confidence in the validity of his own ideological system should be

afraid to permit it to try its luck against another. Persecution of an opinion, however defective, only seems to win supporters for it and to raise it to the dignity of a cause; no books fetch higher prices or secure more eager readers than those placed by the Government on the list of proscribed literature.

It is sometimes contended that as it is the duty of the State to maintain law and order, it cannot permit the dissemination of opinions that threaten the stability of the existing socio-economic order. But this argument suffers from the fallacy of begging the question. It presupposes that the existing order is sacrosanct or, at any rate, so unutterably perfect that it does not admit of a change. But, to quote the poet :

The old order changeth, yielding  
place to new,  
And God fulfils Himself in many  
ways,

Lest one good custom should corrupt  
the world.

If the new thought is really unsuitable, men will reject it; if, on the other hand, it is in accord with the spirit of the times, no force on earth can stop it. If the existing order fails to provide the conditions in which men can find peace of mind and body, it is bound to go under. All the king's horses and all the king's men cannot buttress it up for long.

It is no less wrong for the State to sit in judgment upon Art. It is no easy matter to find a measure of agreement about what constitutes Beauty, which is the province of Art. It would not be safe to trust even a body of experts, however, well-meaning they may be, to act as censors of the obscene. Opinions differ as to what is obscene. Some of the best literature in the world, secular as well as religious, contains pieces which the puritan would like to take out. And yet they are master-

pieces which the world can ill-afford to lose. What is really obscene, an expression of pure sensuality, will have no chance to live and win appreciation in Society whose members are cultured men and women, but it is preposterous to condemn as obscene what might, after all, be only an expression of an important aspect of Reality as manifested in human life and emotions. It would be dangerous to place any individual or body of men in a position in which, through their prudery and prejudices, they might be able to guillotine really good Art and Literature. This, of course, does not preclude the necessity of preventing physical exhibitionism or the public exhibition through a thinly-veiled artistic form of a similar perverted sentiment. Such things offend against public decency and no sensible man would ever want to encourage such display.

Religious liberty is another condition that the State should guarantee. Whatever the personal belief of the man or men in



authority, in the eyes of the State all—the monotheist, the pantheist, the polytheist and the atheist—should be equal. There should neither be a State religion nor the State persecution of any particular religion or all religions. If a religious teacher can, by virtue of his personality or power of exposition, attract men to his standards, he should be free to do so; those who believe in the existence of an extra-human Power may worship It as they please. Those, on the other hand, who are convinced that no such Power exists should be equally free to laugh or weep at the folly of their kind. But the State should not take a hand in these discussions, nor should it oblige the followers of any particular faith by shielding their doctrines or their religious heads, dead or alive, from public criticism, provided that the bounds of public decency are not overstepped. With due regard to the requirements of public order, the State should ensure to every man the observance of his religious rites and ceremonies.

The great test of the existence of liberty in a State is the degree to which it is permissible to criticize acts of the State. The best of us are apt to resent criticism when we are conscious of having acted in good faith. Rulers like others have a tendency to forget that they are human and liable to err like other human beings. There is a tendency to question the good faith of the critic. But if there were no criticism, the mistakes committed by statesmen, mistakes whose repercussions are vast in proportionate conformity to the position of those who commit them, would remain undetected. At any rate, they would not be pointed out, and would tend to be repeated. In fact, rulers who are not subject to frequent and free criticism begin subconsciously to consider themselves almost omniscient. Nemesis is sure to overtake them some day; only it will be preceded by a terrible upheaval. As Rirchie says: "The wise statesman of a free country is not the man who has a mere private theory

of his own and imposes it on a passive and subject class, but the man who sympathetically comprehends the vague wants, the unformulated aspirations of the half-blind, half-dumb many of whom he serves by leading." (Principles of State Interference). As a matter of fact, the degree to which a State submits to public criticism of its acts is a measure of its hold on their allegiance **and** moral support. And the habit of protesting when an act of the State fails to satisfy is a valuable habit. As Laski says: "Men who prefer, in the internal life of a State, the path of perpetual peace to that of organized protest will, sooner or later, lose the habit of freedom."

Details could be multiplied but these are some of the principal spheres in which men should enjoy freedom from restraint. It will be seen thus that liberty is not so much a single unique condition as a totality of such conditions. But in every State occasions will arise when the interests of the State will appear to come into conflict with

those of the individual. The individual should, in such a case, have the right to go before a Court and have the matter adjudicated. The Courts will have to decide whether the State, in other words, the Government acting in the name of the State, has acted according to the law. And in interpreting the Law, the Courts are to remember that whatever transgresses the natural, inherent rights of man, is not sound law. No legislature has the authority to enact a law which shall make man less than man.

But the Courts can function freely and impartially only if they are free from Government control. It should be the invariable rule that except for proved bad conduct, the judiciary should be normally irremovable and not dependent on Government patronage in the matter of pay and promotion. I have used the word 'normally' advisedly. There may arise occasions when it may become advisable to remove a judge, even though there had been no technical

bad conduct. Judges must know that men do not live and work in vacuo. If there has been a change in popular ideology, a social and economic revolution, a judge cannot be permitted to take advantage of his position to uphold the old order. Justice does not mean following some unchangeable, eternal canons of conduct, but seeing that everyone acts according to the standards of conduct which men generally accept as proper in the cultural, social and economic circumstances prevailing at the time.

## VIII

### THE NECESSARY POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

The protection of the liberties indicated in the previous chapter and of those cognate ones which have not been specifically mentioned depends upon the administration of the State being carried on in accordance with certain principles which I shall now proceed briefly to discuss. It is not my intention, because it is not strictly germane to my subject, to discuss the very important question of the exact form of the constitution, and the exact category in which it can be placed in the scheme of classification adopted by text-books of Political Science.

The first great necessity is that the administration should not be over-centralized. Local administration gives an invaluable training in self-government and creates the habit of keeping a vigilant eye

on those who govern. Concentration of all authority in the Central Government may lead to some efficiency and administrative simplicity, but it is almost certain to lead to an abuse of power. Nothing helps so much in the elevation of man's character as the placing of responsibility on his shoulders. Mistakes will, no doubt, be made and their consequences may sometimes be grave but men learn only by making mistakes. And, then, if mistakes are made in a limited sphere today, there is every probability of their not being repeated when the same man is placed in a higher position tomorrow. The art of Government requires training, an arduous apprenticeship. It is desirable, therefore, that as large a number of people as possible should be given the opportunity of sharing in the responsibility of governing themselves. The development of character so acquired will be an invaluable social asset. The world's work is not carried on by its supermen. The genius comes and gives an impetus and then he

leaves the State to lesser men, who have to carry on, according to their humble lights. We cannot ensure the existence of supermen and geniuses in our midst; it is necessary, therefore, to provide that the average of Society shall stand fairly high.

It also follows from this that whatever its strict form, the administration should be essentially democratic in character. The Government should be responsible to the people and its continuance in office should depend upon the pleasure of the governed. Rulers should be liable to render an account of their trusteeship. Within the limits laid down by law, they should have the widest freedom: no man can work if he is pulled up at every step and crippled by restrictions. An atmosphere of jealousy and suspicion suffocates the ruler and demoralizes the ruled. Those who are entrusted with the delicate task of governing their fellows should feel that they carry with them the confidence, the good-will and the active support of the people, but they must



not be allowed to forget that the authority which they exercise has been delegated to them by the general body of citizens to whom they are ultimately responsible. It is only where this condition prevails that the individual can and should take upon himself the responsibility for acts of the State. To ensure that these conditions shall prevail, it is necessary that there should be a provision for a periodic review of the conduct of those in power and election of a new Government.

This does not mean that the methods that obtain at present in Western democracies are, in any sense, above reproach. Administration is no joke. Today it has become a very complicated business. It demands an extraordinary amount of knowledge, patience, experience, courage and self-control. It is only men of the strongest character who can be entrusted with this task. It is only the best men in the community who could be trusted honourably to acquit themselves in a position which offers

such subtle temptations. But this aristocracy of talent and character is hard to find and it is no easy task to induce such men to submit themselves to present-day electioneering methods. The result is that they are rarely found in the ranks of cabinet ministers and legislators and cannot, even if they do happen to be there, render a good account of themselves. Electoral laws do not lay down much higher qualifications for the elected than for their electors ; the result is that, generally, people with very mediocre talents and poor records of public service and integrity but otherwise clever and well-placed with their party caucuses have much better chances of being set up as candidates and getting elected than better men who are inconvenient party members because of their character and intellectual attainments and their incapacity to accommodate themselves to the tactics inseparable from the ballot-box.

The accumulation in the same hands of the means of exercising influence on others

is dangerous. The ancient Hindu law-givers sensed this and provided against it through the caste system. The Brahman was the maker and final interpreter of the Law and the temporal and spiritual teacher of the people. He occupied the position of highest influence in the State but was not permitted to take an active hand in the administration or to possess wealth. He had to live on what he received from others. The Kshattriya, the actual administrator, came second in the social hierarchy and was not permitted to amass wealth. The Vaishya, the merchant, financier, industrialist was given the third place in Society. I am, of course, referring here to the principles underlying the allocation of functions, of *dharmas*, to the various classes within Society, and not supporting the hereditary caste system that we have today. In our day the owner of drinking booths and thinly-disguised brothels or his brother who runs an international organization for smuggling cocaine and, as a side-

show, corners wheat, so that people shall starve in the midst of plenty, can become a Cabinet minister if he chooses and makes the greatest figures in Art, Literature and Science and the highest dignitaries of the church, to kow-tow to him. Nothing could be more degrading or deplorable. If civilization is to be saved, means must be found to fill positions of trust and responsibility with men who are above temptation and have no personal axe to grind, men who take up public office as a piece of sacred duty.

A great impediment to real political liberty is, in my opinion, the existence of independent sovereign States. This subject has now begun to receive some part of the attention it deserves. There was a time when the full sovereignty of a State was a matter of jealous pride to its citizens. But it is only now that the evils of this system have begun to make themselves felt. The attainment of power in such a State becomes the object of every ambitious

man and scheming group within it; it can easily, if it gets the opportunity, turn imperialist and become an instrument for exploiting weaker peoples; its internal and external policies can be manipulated so as to serve the worst designs of those who fatten on the fruits of the labour of other men. The common man can be made, by an appeal to his patriotism, to perform acts of self-denial which benefit no one but his exploiters. It is these men who work and die, unwept, unhonoured and unsung, so that the world may be safe for the greedy rich, the despoiler of men and women. I could not do better than quote the following eloquent tribute to the common man. The passage is taken from H. M. Tomlinson's *Old Junk*: "The well-born, the clever, the haughty, the greedy, in their fear, pride and wilfulness and the perplexity of their scheming make a mess of the world. Forthwith in their panic, they cry 'Calamity cometh.' Then out of their obscurity, where they dwelt because of

their low worth, arise the Nobodies, because theirs is the historic job of restoring again the upset balance of affairs..... About you and me, there are men like that. There is nothing to distinguish them. They show no signs of greatness. They have common talk. They walk with an ugly lurch. Their eyes are not eager. They are not polite. Their clothes are dirty. They live in cheap houses on cheap food. They are the great unwashed, the inevitable many, the common people. Greatness is as common as that." Truly, as Tomlison says, in another place: "These people give to God the only countenance by which He can be known."

There is another way in which the exclusiveness of sovereign States is proving harmful. Competition, jealousy and mutual fear give rise to the doctrine of economic self-sufficiency, lebensraum and co-prosperity. The connotation of these words which sound so inoffensive is, unfortunately, all too familiar to us today. Some

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States control vast economic resources which they cannot easily and profitably use; other States are always casting greedy eyes on the possessions of their more fortunate rivals, while at the same time all States try to produce within their boundaries everything that they can possibly require in peace or war. All this means needless duplication of effort and wastage of resources.

If, instead of independent sovereign States, a federation of peoples were to come into existence, wars and all other evils that are born of cut-throat competition would come to an end and the world's resources would become available for the service of all mankind. Those restraints upon liberty which are a necessary concomitant of a State of perpetual friction and contingent war would automatically disappear and man, as the citizen of a wide world knowing no hostile frontiers, would feel an expansion of his self which would endow liberty with a new meaning.

I have spoken above of a federation of peoples. The reason is obvious. States, as they exist today, do not represent peoples. Unless there is a wide redistribution, they will continue to contain elements whose one wish will be to leave them. If such redistribution is effected, a federation of States will really be a federation of peoples.



## IX

### THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

A certain social atmosphere is needed before liberty can be enjoyed. I have already said in the preceding chapter that there should be no privileged class. There I was thinking of political privileges. But the statement is equally true of social privileges. The abuses to which the institution of hereditary castes has lent itself in India is an illustration in point. It has almost de-humanized the so-called lower castes, particularly those treated as untouchable, but the higher castes have also suffered a corresponding deterioration in character. The old law-givers, even while they laid down the rules governing the system, took care to mention only the *dharama*-duties of each caste. They specifically use this term and no other and no list of the privileges to be enjoyed by any caste is given.

Such privileges are a matter of inference. But today everyone of the three higher castes has forgotten its duties and only remembers what it is pleased to call its rights. The Brahman, the highest of all, does not admit that he owes any duty to Society. False pride on the one hand, and abject servility coupled with impotent rage on the other, have acted like an insidious poison on Society. Freedom demands that there shall be social equality in the community.

It is necessary to understand the meaning of this term. All men are not born equal. Differences in physical and intellectual endowment are congenital and ineradicable. But what can be remedied is such artificial inequalities as are created by the accident of birth in a certain family or group of families, high or low. The complexes created by the status attached to such birth create infinite complications and cause untold miseries when they come into conflict, as they are bound to do, with

the objective realities of life which do not recognize such distinctions. Equality, in the context of life, can only mean equality of opportunity and the recognition that all honest work is valuable and honourable, though not necessarily deserving similar payment. The preparation required to become a successful inventor or scientific research worker is infinitely greater than that required to become a successful washerman. And a comparatively larger number of men can become skilled washermen. The results of scientific research may revolutionize the lives of millions; no amount of successful washing of clothes is likely to have such far-reaching results. The world would, therefore, be justified in bestowing greater honour and higher rewards on the scientist than on the *dhobi*. But the *dhobi* is nonetheless a useful member of Society, who is not to be despised. He is an indispensable man, and in any case no man shall be prevented from becoming a professor of science, if he posses-

ses the necessary talents, merely because he happens to be a *dhobi's* son. Today we witness a curious paradox. Some men are considered to be superior to others simply because they happen, apparently through no efforts on their own part, to have been born in certain families ; on the other hand, all men are supposed to be equally capable of understanding the most abstruse political problems and, therefore, deserving to be given the power not only to cast a vote but to get elected as legislators and potential administrators of the State.

But even political and social equality are not enough. Such equality exists in most countries in Europe and, if we ignore the existence of negroes for a moment, the United States may be said to have made very great progress in this direction. Educational institutions are open to all and no one is debarred from the highest offices in the State because of his caste, creed or social origin. Yet it would be incorrect to say that there is real liberty

in America. No one who has studied American life is unaware of the fact that power there is still concentrated in the hands of a few people not un-often linked to each other by ties of close family relationship. They form an elastic caste in an apparently casteless Society.

The differences which make this state of affairs possible have their roots in the economic conditions of our times. It is necessary that along with political and social inequalities, economic inequality should also disappear. This does not merely mean equality of opportunity. Such equality may be said to exist in some measure even today. Apart from competition there is no bar to any one becoming rich, if he possesses the necessary talents. Nor does economic equality necessarily imply equality in wages. What the term really means is that all who are willing and able shall get work suited to their capacities, there shall be equal payment for the same kind of work and, what is most important, no one shall be in a

position to exploit another, *i. e.*, profit by the fruits of that other's labour. This means that real economic equality can exist only under a socialist dispensation.

The power which money wields is tremendous. The man who possesses it can buy up scientists, artists, poets and authors; university professors and heads of religious institutions dance to the tune set by him. Politicians and statesmen vie with one another in carrying out his behests. He is the power behind the throne and ordains war and peace.

This wealth is not the product of the bodily or intellectual labours of the captain of industry and finance or a pile built up by him from his life-long savings. It comes from manipulating other people's money and exploiting other people's labour. The man who picks one man's pocket is condemned to prison, the man who can simultaneously pick the pockets of thousands is the recipient of high honour.

Trade and industry flourish only for the benefit of a few. Commodities are produced not for feeding the hungry and clothing the naked but for bringing money and more money to a few, who cannot spend it all upon themselves. This money which they amass is not spent on their enjoyments; the greater part of it becomes capital. Thus the merry circle goes on. The capitalist employs the labours of thousands who do not get the full reward for their toil. As one of the characters in one of Upton Sinclair's novels says: "We live to work, to get the money, to buy the food to live, to work to get the money and so on" *ad infinitum*, till the worker drops down dead or is thrown out like a sucked orange.

It is cruel to pretend that the worker is, in any sense, the equal of his employer. He has no savings to fall back upon and cannot hold out in any protracted struggle against the employer. By combining with his fellows he has certainly improved his position but, even so, the capitalist is on

strategically stronger ground as compared to him. The fact still remains that he who works is infinitely worse off than he who does not. He wears out his soul in a life-long struggle against poverty and squalor and cannot rise to the full height of his personality. Art, literature and science do not exist for him: he does not know what healthy recreation really means.

And this is not all. While some are doomed to live in life-long miserable poverty, others live in comfortable enjoyment of wealth which they have done nothing to earn. Even if it were admitted that the kind of cleverness displayed by a successful entrepreneur merits exceptional reward, there can be no justification for his passing it on to his son. We do not make a man an army commander or a University professor because he happens to be a general's or a professor's son. Is there any reason, then, why the son of a man who has made his pile by the exercise of a



certain type of intelligence and foresight should be permitted to inherit his wealth, when wealth is not merely a means of enjoyment but an instrument for exploiting others ?

Poverty is a misfortune but the state that permits poverty to exist commits a perpetual crime. People are not poor because they do not want to work or because there is not work enough for all, nor is poverty due, except temporarily in times of war perhaps, to an insufficiency of commodities. Many men are poor because of the present economic organization of society which permits the accumulation of capital and the ownership of the principal means of production and distribution by private individuals. Charity and doles may solve the problem for a few for a short time, but they offer no permanent solution. They are simply a form of insurance against bread riots. Under social ownership alone will it be possible to have an equitable distribution of wealth and to ensure to every

man his proper wages. Then alone can the man who works get a decent chance to share in the cultural life of the community and to unfold his personality. Under these conditions that degradation of character which is a feature of the capitalist system will automatically disappear. It is idle to expect high moral stamina from people whose happiness can be blasted at the sweet will of others. A government which continues to send burglars to prison without making sure that there is honest work available for them is itself a gang of criminals. In a society in which talent and virtue can be purchased and the sole accepted criterion of a man's worth is the strength of his banking account, among men who have been brought up in the belief that ruthless competition is the sovereign rule of life, moral values are bound to get warped. The forms of democracy are reduced to a farce when election to public office depends upon party funds. There can be no real democracy where social equality

and economic equality in the sense I have explained above do not exist. No other atmosphere could be more conducive than the one created by the inauguration of socialist economy for the development of true art and literature. It is only under these conditions that men can give free vent to their creative instincts.

The objection is often put forward that, under a socialist ordering of society, there will be no incentive for any one to put in more than the bare minimum required to earn some kind of a comfortable living. It is true that, used as we are to a state in which the profit motive predominates over all others, we cannot understand that public spirit, or pure joy of work, or the approbation of one's fellows are strong enough to produce good work. Laski says in this connection : "In current practice, a man is supposed to die for the State but he is not supposed to work for any one but himself in industry. Therefore, he is assumed to be at the same time both an angel and a devil.

The result, during the recent war, was amusing, if it was not pathetic. Some men as soldiers were supposed to live and die for the community, other men as traders or munition workers or ship-owners certainly supposed themselves to be justified in making as much private wealth out of the community needs as they could." The reference in this passage is to the war of 1914-18, but the statement is as true today and of the present war as it was at the time it was written. It is only because of the wrong basis on which the whole social structure is built and the unwarranted position that capitalism gives to money which has made the profit motive so predominant. The best work in art, science and literature, work which has left its permanent impress on the human mind, was an expression of the creative instinct which had no pecuniary motives behind it. To assert that men work for personal profit alone is to assert one's want of faith in human nature and man's destiny.

The state has to work unceasingly to create and maintain the socio-economic environment outlined above. It has to keep constant watch, if the old forces of egoism and self-aggrandizement are not to raise their heads once again. It must remember that the progress and prosperity of a community are to be judged from the condition of the majority, not that of a fortunate few; and it will be entitled to the loyalty and obedience of the individual to the extent that it keeps this goal consistently in view. If through its army and police, its laws and its law-courts, it permits itself to become the guardian of the interests of a vested class, it forfeits its claim to the allegiance not only of those who do not happen to belong to this fortunate class but of all those right-thinking men who feel that social and economic injustice are a negation of the natural rights of man.

## X THE LIMITS OF VIGILANCE

Dupont states in '*L'individu et L'etat*' that the weakness and meanness of the individual does not allow civilization to flourish and develop as it should. Hard as the words sound, they embody a great truth. The ultimate units in every institution are individuals and their virtues and vices are bound to be reflected in the organization which they build up. We have discussed in previous chapters some of the conditions which should obtain in every State but laws and constitutions do not operate automatically, *i. e.*, of their own momentum. Those who work them and derive a benefit from their proper working are, after all, individuals.

I have stated before that vigilance is the price of liberty. It is difficult to set up a good organization but it is still more difficult to maintain it in its original purity. It

is the little things of life which escape notice but it is the cumulative effect of these little things which makes or mars a nation's happiness. Those who are indifferent towards their civic rights and are not prepared to resist any encroachment, howsoever slight, on public liberty will end by betraying freedom. A community, the great majority of whose citizens consists of such individuals, cannot retain its independence for long. Even if no foreigner steps in formally to deprive the people of their sovereignty, power is bound to pass into the hands of an oligarchy and the State to become totalitarian in all essentials, even if the forms of democracy are retained to some extent.

It is idle to expect justice in an oligarchy. If a government is not broadbased on the will of the whole people, it must seek support from a group within the community. In such a case, all its institutions are bound to serve the interests of this particular group. Judges and legislators need

not be deliberately unfair; being human, they would find it almost impossible to transcend the limitations imposed upon them by their class affiliations and group interests. Complete justice can be dispensed only in an atmosphere which is not polluted by the clash of sectional interests. Plato would like philosophers alone to take the reins of government. This does not seem to be a practical proposition today but all alike, philosophers included, must take an active interest in public affairs. If the scholar and the philosopher refuse to soil their hands with politics and to come down to sordid earth, as they will have to do if they wish to ensure the permanence of democracy and social and economic equality, they must be prepared to be ruled by selfish men who will respect no law save that of their own personal interest.

No limits can be set to the vigilance which must be displayed in the defence of civil liberty. No one can afford to be a slave. The government must be subjected



to criticism in the press and on the platform. This alone can keep the executive up to the requisite standard of efficiency and integrity. It may be necessary to go further and resort to that type of resistance to authority which is called non-co-operation. The non-co-operator does not ignore the existence of the State, nor does he reject its right to legislate or carry out its decisions through executive action and judicial pronouncements. He does not seek to overthrow it but he feels that some of its acts are prejudicial to public good. He opposes them actively and courts willingly whatever punishment the State chooses to impose upon him. In this way he draws pointed attention to those obnoxious acts and hopes to bring about a change of heart in the government or a strong wave of feeling in the public mind which would eventually remove those obstructions to the public weal. Prahlad in India and Socrates in Greece may be taken as very good examples of this type in the past. Those who have

watched the non-co-operation and civil disobedience movements in India from 1921 to 1940 can easily understand the philosophy and technique of this method of resistance against authority.

But even this is found to be insufficient at certain periods in a nation's history. It appears to thinking people that the State has lost all claims to public respect and support and a complete overhauling of the whole machinery can alone bring about those conditions in which normal life can go on. In these circumstances, people cannot wait for the slow process of evolution to set things right. They try revolution. The patent, immediate causes of a revolution are political but there are deeper currents underneath. As Bukharin says in *Historical Materialism*: "There are no purely political revolutions, every revolution is a social (class-displacing) revolution and every social revolution is a political revolution", and again, "The cause of revolutions is the conflict between the productive

forces and the productive relations, as solidified in the political organization of the ruling class. These productive relations are so emphatic a brake on the evolution of the productive forces that they simply must be broken up if society is to continue to develop. If they cannot be burst asunder, they will prevent and stifle the unfolding of the productive forces, and the entire society will become stagnant or retrogressive, *i.e.*, it will enter upon a period of decay". One need not accept the theory of historical materialism in its entirety to see that these excerpts contain a good deal of truth. All great revolutions, the English, the French and the Russian, to give three outstanding examples, have involved the displacement from economic and political power of one class by another. There has been in all these cases not only a change of personnel in the government but a new adjustment of socio-economic relations as well. One can see the unfoldment of the same process in the Chinese and Indian

revolutions. The struggle against foreign domination masks the true nature of the forces operating to shape the future but it is not difficult to trace the increasingly important role economic factors are playing in the life of these countries today.

Every national uprising is not, however, a revolution. A revolution is sometimes directed merely against the personnel of the ruling group. The rebels, in this case, also belong to the same socio-economic class as those whom they wish to remove from power and the result of the movement, if it is successful, merely transfers the right to act in the name of the State from one set of persons to another, without disturbing the social and economic foundations of society. The kaleidoscopic changes in certain periods of Indian history wherein Pathan, Rajput and Mahratha succeed one another with remarkable rapidity left the feudal structure of society almost totally undisturbed. Such rebellions are really local or internal adjustments, necessitated

by religious or cultural differences. Normally such differences can very well exist together without disturbing the economic equilibrium of society. When they are allied to the social or political ambitions of a group within the State, they provide the emotional setting for a rebellion; in an atmosphere surcharged with economic unrest, they erupt into a revolution. Every group of rebels and revolutionaries fortifies itself with a philosophy, but, as has been well observed, ideologies are a coagulated social psychology.

There is one very important consideration which should always weigh heavily with those who may be inclined to feel that the only way to obtain a redress of public grievances in existing circumstances is to organize an open defiance of State authority. It is comparatively easy to raise the forces of disorder but very difficult to control them when once they are thoroughly roused. The slightest technical mistake may lead to a disaster involving

thousands of innocent men and women and jeopardizing the happiness of generations yet unborn. It is better to put up with many an act of State which one considers to be oppressive and harmful than to precipitate an opposition to it on insufficient grounds and without adequate material and psychological preparation. It is not worthwhile to disturb the normal life of the community over every injudicious act of the executive or to magnify every petty mistake into a deliberate exhibition of policy. Dispassionateness and the highest strength of character characterize the true leader of men and such a leader will not lightly take upon himself the responsibility of disrupting the State in the pursuit of an elusive paradise. Those in authority are human beings no less than other citizens and have a right to expect sympathetic understanding and co-operation from their fellowmen.

But all this is no justification for laxity in vigilance. One can and should make an allowance for another man's errors but

there can be no condonation of acts, even if they are committed in perfect good faith, prejudicial to public good or civil liberty, if they are persisted in, in spite of public criticism and lawful agitation. There can be no compromise on principles and there are no legitimate limits to the efforts and the sacrifices that must be made if liberty is to be preserved in fact. Men who are not prepared to fight and, should the need arise, to lay down their lives will not long maintain their political, social or economic freedom. No compromise can be entertained on first principles. Anything that encroaches on the rights of man as man, anything that would tend to reduce all men to a pattern, thinking and acting according to the dictates of an external authority, must be resisted at all costs. The path of self-realization will be effectively blocked for those who are not free to think for themselves and willing to face the consequences of their thought.

## XI

### RIGHTS AND DUTIES

Too much emphasis can never be laid on the necessity for vigilance, if those political, social, economic and cultural conditions are to be maintained in which alone the State can properly function. Such vigilance can come only from a proper training in citizenship which implies a sound system of general education, aiming at the evolution of the total personality and the full development of the intellectual and spiritual potentialities of the individual. A system which dwarfs a man as a spiritual entity by trying to mould him into the pattern of some passing theory of the moment may turn him into an efficient automaton but a person who can respond to his environment only in a manner fixed for him by others is not a citizen who can be trusted to look after civil liberty and national independence. It is only the man



who has a strong will, tempered with deep and broad sympathy, and an intellect trained to analyse situations and take decisions, who may be relied upon to safeguard democracy and liberty.

I shall not go into the question of educational theory and practice in this book but some reference must be made to the principles that should guide moral education which is an important factor of, if not another name for, civil education and character training. The generic name for such principles is *dharma*, a word which has no exact equivalent in English or any other language. It does not mean religion, because it does not imply any credo and does not necessarily postulate any form of worship. The nearest approach to an exact rendering would be performance of duty, using the word duty in the widest possible sense. It implies a recognition of the basic act of the inter-connection and inter-dependence of all life. The denizens, if any, of the farthest regions of space, the highest

gods and the lowest elementals, men, animals, all form parts of the body of *Virat Purusha*, the Cosmic Being. The ill-functioning of the lowest of these organisms affects the life, in howsoever small a degree, of the whole. That all may prosper, all must function properly and this can only be if all realize their relationship to others and to the All. Such a relationship leaves no room for self-centredness, isolationism or oppression. Sin and crime are spiritual maladjustments that cannot fail to recoil some day, somewhere, somehow, on those who commit them. Duty, *dharma*, consists in fulfilling our obligations to all the other members of the great Body of which we are units, because in such action alone lies our own happiness and prosperity. This may be called enlightened self-interest; but a devotion to duty even from such a motive soon enlarges a man's mental horizon, so that the means becomes an end in itself. Now, the complete performance of *dharma* requires an amount of knowledge and

disinterestedness which very few possess but sincerity of purpose, intelligent application, and a constant analysis of one's own motives will go very far towards correcting errors incidental to human weakness.

Attention may be drawn here to the never-ending struggle for rights which is the source of so much bitterness and unrest. Such a struggle can hardly end, because the acquisition of every fresh right <sup>66</sup>points the way to others still to be won. Moreover, there seem to be more claimants than there are objects to go round and this necessarily entails hardship and heart-burning. But there is another side to the shield which hardly receives the attention it deserves. There is no right without a corresponding duty. A right which is not based upon a definite duty corrupts its enjoyer and the whole body politic. It would be a great gain, therefore, if the whole scheme of education were so orientated that every individual would take pride in the performance of his duties and not in the enjoy-

ment of his rights. There might be schedules of duties where we see schedules of rights today. The *smritis* in Ancient India give lists of the *dharma*s, functions or duties, of the various castes but none of them contains an inventory of rights. If there is to be a competition among men, and within limits the spirit of competition is not anti-social, let there be a competition in service. Such a spirit of healthy rivalry will ennoble the individual and benefit the whole of society. If this spirit animated the citizen, the State would no longer be an arena, as it very often is today, for petty jealousies and ambitions.

That concentration of power, honour and wealth in the same hands which is a characteristic feature of modern society is really a curse. It degrades human character and deprives the State of the services of many a sensitive man whose character and intellectual attainments would be an asset to any institution. If corporate life could be so organized that the highest

honour would be the meed of the highest service and a man's worth would be appraised not by the rights he claims or enjoys but the duties he performs and qualifies himself to perform, mankind would begin to live upon an altogether new plane of existence. Rights would automatically flow from duties, exploitation and oppression would cease, and all the organs of Society, the State among them, would flourish in such a way as to conduce, each in its own sphere but not in isolation from the others, to the highest life for each and all.

## XII

### THE STATE AND THE GOOD LIFE

I have stated in a previous chapter that, according to the *vedanta*, the supreme object of man's life is self-realization. Breaking the bonds of nescience, a man should realize his identity with Brahma, the norm and substratum of this illusory world of mind, matter and motion. This liberation of the self from *avidya* (nescience) is not merely the intellectual acceptance of a philosophical theory : it is a state of beatitude, a mystic vision, a spiritual transformation which is the result of a long process of self-discipline and spiritual training.

This ecstatic experience of the *yogi* is purely personal. It effects a metamorphosis of his whole personality and attitude towards life. How can a person who sees himself in all life and all living things in himself hate or exploit another ? The

teaching 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' acquires a new significance for him who knows, 'I am my neighbour'. Such men are, verily, the salt of the earth and enrich it in a hundred ways by their precept and example. But in spite of his significance to society, the *yogi*, as such, can hardly be called a social product. Society knows of no way to ensure a recurrent supply of mystics and it cannot do anything directly to help the novice on the mystic way.

But the aspirant after self-realization needs society and its institutions nonetheless. There are human faculties which can evolve and function only in a social environment. But social life involves the adjustment and co-ordination of a number of activities, resulting in the establishment of some kind of State organization. The State cannot turn men into *yogis* but it can remove the obstacles from the path of those seeking truth and create and maintain conditions under which there will be a minimum of dissipation of spiritual energy and

a maximum of incentive to lead the good life which, as Bertrand Russel says, is one 'inspired by love' and guided by knowledge.' There are two methods which society can mainly adopt to foster this end. Again quoting Russel, they will be "to produce social institutions under which the interests of different individuals or groups conflict as little as possible, and to educate individuals in such a way that their desires can be harmonized with each other and with the desires of their neighbours. The failure to create such institutions and to give individuals such education has negatived the effects of much of the spiritual teaching mankind has been receiving from its saints and prophets down the ages. To preach contentment to a man who sees himself cheated of his due so that others may fatten on the products of his labour, to discourse on the pleasures of paradise to a starving beggar, to speak of the justice of God to a person who every day of his life sees two sets of laws in operation, one



for the rich and the powerful and other for the poor and the weak, is to insult humanity. A State which does not scrupulously respect truth and honesty in its dealings with other States cannot inculcate these virtues in its citizens. The wonder—and wonder leads to hope—is that mankind has not, by now, lost all faith in itself.

The State can do much to foster that faith. By removing temptations and creating those conditions in which each man can work and receive the food, clothing and education which is his birth-right, by uprooting those demoralizing and depressing institutions, social, political and economic, which brand one man as inferior to another or place him under another's power and by providing those opportunities for leisure and recreation without which man sinks to the level of a beast of burden, the State, as representing society, can place within the reach of each individual the means of rising to his fullest spiritual stature without, in any way, disturbing any

other individual, engaged in a similar enterprise. This is the sole justification for its existence and for the allegiance which it expects from its citizens.

By adopting a positive attitude towards *dharma*, by maintaining a social milieu in which men should be honoured not for what they possess but for what they are, their learning, public services, *tapasya* and spirit of sacrifice, the State will have done all that is socially possible to help man in his search for happiness and freedom. The journey to the goal of self-realization can only be performed by each man alone for himself.

Self-realization will not be achieved merely by leading a moral life. It requires a severe self-discipline, a conquering of the flesh and a long course of spiritual exercises, leading to the final beatitude wherein nescience shall have been rolled away as a mist and complete at-one-ment with the whole of Reality experienced. No one,

except the initiate's *guru*, his spiritual guide, can illumine this path for him. But the State, as we have seen, can make it possible for an ever-increasing number of individuals to walk along this path. And though men tread on this road alone, the whole of Society gains by the fact that there are such men in its midst. A *yogi* who is advanced far enough in this direction is in the state of *dharma—megha samadhi*, a state in which *dharma* rains from his personality as naturally as water from a cloud. Such a man would be a living embodiment of all that is noblest in human character and of that 'peace which passeth all human understanding,' and his actions would be guided not by fleeting passions or desires but by the single wish that all should share in that bliss and knowledge which is the goal of existence. His mere presence would be an object-lesson to his fellowmen in goodness and a living and loving ideal. Such men cannot be made to order. They are born once in a thou-

sand years. We can count the Srikrishnas, Buddhas, Christs and Shankaracharyas on our fingers. But if Society and its organs, among which the State occupies a predominant position, can smoothen the difficulties in the path of the aspirant after this goal and can so adjust the social sense of values that Brahmanhood, the knowledge and realization of one's identity with Brahma which is the whole of Reality, should be considered man's noblest ambition, it will have done all that can reasonably be asked of it.